

ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES AFTER LOCKDOWN

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Abstract

The Pandemic has totally changed the life-style of the people. It is said this pandemic is bigger than the deaths caused in World War II. Throughout the world lock down had been announced and strictly followed by the countries to preserve and secure life. Transport, socialising, flights, business work, industries, factories were all stopped. Even it was ensured by the governments of the different countries that people should not move out from their houses. Social distancing was strictly followed. Mask had become the part of life. It was all done to check spreading Corona Virus and the deaths of the falling victims. But during the fight with COVID-19 nobody had thought of the other aspect of this problem. It can be taken as blessings in disguise. People started feeling after the fortnight of the lockdown that the environment around them is changing. Previously in the hustle and bustle of the life we were not realizing that how much damage we were doing to nature. We have wounded it badly undoubtedly in the name of progress and modernization. We became so selfish that we were not giving ears to the crying wounded mother earth. We were even ignoring the forewarnings of her. The result is the mass disaster. But this pandemic has bright aspect too. Environment has taken an unexpected turn. It appears as if the earth were healing itself in this lockdown and has shown better result too. Who has ever thought that our Pious Ganges on which crores of rupees have been spent for cleaning and restoring her pioucity under "Namami Ganga Project" during this lockdown period has become pure and clear she has regained her original form that can be seen in Haridwar. Same is the case with air, climate, greenry, environment. They all are recovering all their former mood.

Reference to this paper
should be made as follows:

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*ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES
AFTER LOCKDOWN*

*Vol. XIII, Special Issue
pp.36-39
Article No.8*

Similarity Check: 0%

Online available at:
<http://jgv.anubooks.com>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31995/jgv.2022v13iS.008>

Due to lockdown industries were shut and industrial waste emission has decreased to a large extent, vehicles were not running, on the roads therefore zero emission of greenhouse and toxic tiny particles to the environment. The use of fossil fuels or conventional energy sources have been minimised and resulted in better ecosystem. In the hustle and bustle of cities people got an opportunity to see clear sky, sunrise and chirping of birds after a long time. The pollution level shrunk to a great extent and Ozone layer has been revived. Despite the destruction caused by pandemic it cannot be ignored that it had conducive too on the environment. There is an immense change in water and air quality.

It is remarkable that the lockdown measures have brought an opportunity to rationalize positive human environment impacts on other parts of the world as well. A sudden drop in carbon emission has been noted when compared with the data related to the pollution of previous year. It can be marked that pollution levels in New York, USA have come down by almost 50%, in China 30% NO₂ and 25% carbon, according to ecology and environment ministry almost 11.4% improvement in air quality is reported in China and Europe. In India it is 12.10% the results indicate that restrictions on major man made inventions and activities resulted in the fall of NO₂ levels and during lockdown period it declined 65.90% in Delhi. It has been proved by the studies conducted by Watts and Kommenda, 2020 and Cadotte, 2020.

Now it has become clear that man and only man is responsible for this. Man made technology and exploitation of natural resources in the name of progress and development has created disaster. Scientists have accepted that excess consumption of meat, increase of global warming and weak immunity are some of the reasons that contributed in this pandemic and took ferocious form. Along with it environment pollution is also causing reverse effect on our health and making us weaker to fight against diseases. Industrialization and growing concrete jungles have decreased the minerals of the earth, forests have been shrunk, which have caused imbalance between natural and humans. Word Metrological Science Organization report 'The State of the Global Climate' tells that in recent years global warming has broken all records. Year 2019 has been recorded as the warmest year of the decade 2010-2019. Environment pollution crisis has not only hit ecological balance but also taken human life from bad to worse. According to a report in 2018, 82 crore people were on the verge of starvation and about 67 Lakhs were uprooted in the world due to this calamity All these things compel us to preview our past mistakes and wrongs done to nature and its resources. It is definitely our blunder to consider materialism, consumerism, production, luxuries as synonyms to modernism and progressiveness. This mentality has given rise to individualism and liberalism. It may appear good superficially but it has given birth to many anomalies in Nature.

Today all developed and scientifically matured countries may be economically strong but were helpless before increasing pollution. This pandemic has given us an opportunity to reboot and re-set judicially our environmental programmes and economical politics globally. During this pandemic lockdown – we all knew that emissions had sharply fallen. But the question arises will all these changes actually be good in the long run? But on the other hand heaps of food is going to waste due to lack of supply chains to deal with. Cities usually come at the price of green space. But worldwide lockdown has helped greenery to spread in this urban landscapes. Vegetation helps to make city air safer.

According to many experts lockdown has given a glimpse of what the world might look like with out fossil fuels. It was hoped that humanity could emerge from this pandemic into a healthier, cleaner world would depend not on the short term impact of the virus, but on the long-term political decisions made about what follows.

It is well-known fact that there is no excess health risk, when the concentration of the pollution is less. The access of tourists to beaches has also been restrained which resulted in a remarkable transformation of many beaches in the world, Beaches like Acapulco (Mexico), Salinas (Ecuador), Barcelona (Spain) still look clean and fresh with their sparkling water, In Venice too it is a pleasure to see water channels cleaner due to reduction of the movements of speed boats, residue churning and other aquatic impurities.

Another big challenge after lockdown is to make proper arrangement of disposing off medical waste and has to recycle it. It may be a major problem to manage medical waste for the governments. For the decontamination of it concerned governments may take help of organizations and companies in relation to the waste management. It is also the responsibility of every citizen to obey the rules and regulations when throwing the face masks and other medical wastes. The growing and continuous use of the personal protective equipments have caused a rise in the quantity of garbage. Think what will happen in future when the trash discarded by 7 million people around the globe will be in a heap and will be danger for the life of sea-creatures and animals. Now-a-days a lot of debate on this burning topic is taking place. The solution overall to this problem is found only in the recycling of the waste. It should be the primary concern to all Nations. It is also an important method of pollution control, preservation of natural resource and energy conservation (Varotto and Spagnolli, 2017; Maetal, 2019)

People in wide range have learnt to teleconference from home that indicates Govt. to switch infrastructure investment from building new roads to widening internet bandwidth. This will be potentially good news for the climate because oil is the biggest source of carbon emissions that are causing global warming and disturbing weather system. But the tension is this drop in emissions driven by tens of millions of people losing their jobs. Therefore, we need systematic change in our energy infrastructure or emissions will roar back after lockdown. If government prime the economic gains with the intension of a return to business as usual, environmental gains are likely to be temporary or reversed. UN leaders, scientists and activists are pushing for an urgent public debate so that recovery can focus on green jobs and clean energy, building efficiency, natural infrastructure and a strengthening of the global commons. Laurence Tubiana, CEO of the European Climate Foundation and an architect of Paris agreement, said "This is a big political battle." It is for the governments to use recovery packages to shift in a greener direction rather than going back to business as usual.

People have to follow some rules and regulations even after the lockdown to lead a safe and normal life. People should stay at home and minimize straying. Though for people living in small, cramped houses without having outspace it will be difficult. There should be special restriction strategies and efforts for protecting vulnerable populations like healthcare workers, children and elderly people. Public service must provide multiple daily reagents for decontaminating hands to avoid the risk of people at large taking virus at home.

Screening at the time of travel could limit the virus spreading. It is important to take into account the possible ways of transmission, development and spread of the virus among humans and animals. Highly infectious zones should be marked in particular. Household garbage should not be thrown and collected outside in open to give free zone for flies and nuisance. Instead it should be dumped into pits. Proper protective measures should be taken and is infectant spray should be done. Online services for medicine, vegetables, grocery, milk etc. should be promoted. Large gathering on religious activities and marriage parties should be avoided. One should become a responsible citizen himself in this tough time.

The pandemic has also shown that pollution lowers our resistance to disease. Nature is sending us a message that if we neglect the planet, we put our own wellbeing at risk. It is true Words Worth has said,"

One impulse of a vernal wood,
May teach you more of man.
Of moral, evil and of good,
Than all the sages can."

(Tables Turned, W.W, Lyrical Ballads, 1798)

The lockdown has given us a chance to step back and assess our impact on the environment. We are breathing pure air, drinking pure water and living a healthy life free from pollution, this is what we were longing for. Thus, before we resume life as usual, we should take pledge to instill the principles of sustainable

development in our social behavior and life style to make our environment pure, clean & healthy. Despite all this we should be aware that there may be more challenging environmental problems to manage if countries neglect the impact of epidemic on environment.

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